



What preservice teachers can learn from studies of teachers' work

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Abstract

This article recommends that research on teachers' work be included more systematically in teacher preparation curricula. Findings from the international literature on teachers' work are summarized in three areas: characteristics of teachers' work; working conditions; and teaching as coping and adapting. Based on the argument that new teachers should have an active role in their own socialization, the case is made that teacher educators should include explorations of teaching as work in teacher preparation experiences. Specific suggestions for including studies of teachers' work in teacher education programs are provided. © 1999 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

"Teachers are workers, teaching is work, and the school is a workplace" (Connell, 1985, p. 69). These simple facts are often forgotten as researchers go about studying teaching, as teachers themselves go about their day-to-day activities, and as teacher educators go about preparing prospective teachers. Although it is seldom characterized as such, teaching is a job – a job with particular characteristics, a job done in particular settings, a job requiring particular kinds of adaptations from those who do it. Students seeking a credential to teach seldom think of their futures as getting and keeping a job

with task expectations, working conditions, and human relationships that are structured in particular ways (Hargreaves, 1994); but perhaps they should.

A strong thread that runs through my beliefs about teacher education is that new teachers should experience socialization into the profession *by design*, as opposed to *by default*. The processes of being socialized into any new role typically go on beneath the level of conscious awareness – what Becker (1970, p. 162) called "socialization by default." But socialization processes can be brought to the surface for examination, and novice teachers can learn to monitor and adjust to forces shaping their socialization into the school workplace (Hatch, 1984). By including information about teachers' work in our teacher preparation programs, we can give new teachers knowledge that

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may be essential for guiding their own socialization. Leaving such information out of our teacher education curricula may limit teachers' opportunities to understand and/or resist forces that strongly influence what it is like to work as a teacher.

I have followed the development of teachers' work research in a number of countries over the past several years. In the United Kingdom and Western Europe, as well as in nations such as Australia, Canada, and the United States, there is evidence that teaching may be becoming a more complex, more demanding, and less satisfying job. In this article, I present several generalizations drawn from a cross-national analysis of literature on teachers' work. The literature reviewed included books, articles, and chapters published since 1985 that report research or synthesize the research of others related to three "issues for analysis" from Connell's *Teachers' Work* (1985, p. 70): labor processes; division of labor; and patterns of control and autonomy. The generalizations presented in this article are organized into three broad, and sometimes overlapping, categories that parallel Connell's issues for analysis: characteristics of teachers' work; working conditions; and teaching as coping and adapting. Acknowledging the limitations of applying broad generalizations to particular situations, I then argue that teacher educators have a practical and moral obligation to include explorations of teaching as work in their teacher preparation programs. I conclude with suggestions for how teacher education students can be exposed to the teachers' work research findings in ways that give them a stronger base on which to build their own worklives as teachers.

2. Characteristics of teachers' work

What is the nature of teachers' work in contemporary Western schools? What characteristics of teaching should students know about as they prepare to enter the teaching workforce? Every occupation has attributes that frame the experience of its workers. While it is impossible to predict the actual experience of these attributes in each and every workplace, it is useful for workers to under-

stand the general characteristics associated with their work. Although their expression will be unique to each school setting, knowing attributes that characterize teaching is important if education students are to be effective in adapting to and altering the school settings in which they will be employed. In this section, I concentrate on three attributes that characterize teachers' work: uncertainty, isolation, and its gendered nature.

2.1. *Uncertainty is endemic to teachers' work*

More recent analyses (e.g. Ashton & Webb, 1986; Hargreaves & Tucker, 1991; Jackson, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1989) confirm the accuracy of Lortie's (1975) declaration that "uncertainty is the lot of those who teach" (p. 133). Teaching is uncertain because it requires teachers to make a multitude of complex decisions in rapid-fire fashion and because teachers get little reliable feedback about the effectiveness of those decisions in accomplishing their goals. Teacher decision making is uncertain because it is not rooted in a well-developed, codified technical knowledge base. Education has not developed professionally sanctioned goals or scientifically proven teaching techniques, leaving teachers responsible for making myriad decisions based on their own best judgment (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1989).

Huberman (1993) notes that classrooms are characterized by "indeterminacy of outcomes" (p. 26), arguing that variations in pupils, teachers, and the implementation of instructional approaches make the effects of teaching difficult to gauge, forcing teachers to evaluate their effectiveness based on "principles derived from observations of their own – and virtually no one else's – experience in the classroom" (Huberman, 1993, p. 26). Teachers are rarely sure of the connections between what they are teaching and what their students are learning. As Ashton and Webb (1986) summarize,

Teaching provides few day-to-day (or year-to-year) assurances that a teacher's decisions have been wise and effective; that students are making progress academically, socially, or psychologically, or that the progress

students are making is the result of the teacher's actions and not the home environment, the work of other teachers, or the student's own maturation and native ability (p. 43).

The complex and dynamic nature of classrooms, the lack of a codified set of techniques for best practice, and the unclear linkages between teacher actions and pupil outcomes leave teachers without ways to assess their professional competence and vulnerable to feelings of uncertainty.

2.2. Teachers perform most of their work in isolation

The egg-crate architecture of most schools and the way school schedules are set make it difficult for teachers to really know what goes on in other teachers' classrooms. Teachers are cut off from their colleagues and spend a large portion of their worklives isolated from other adults. A variety of approaches have been applied to the analysis and explanation of teacher isolation, but there is solid agreement across the literatures on Western schooling that isolation is a pervasive feature of teaching (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Cole, 1991; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Flinders, 1988; Hargreaves, 1994; Jordell, 1987; Rosenholtz, 1989).

Isolation contributes to teachers' feelings of uncertainty because they are left alone to face the many problems that confront all teachers. An ethic of self-reliance and non-interference develops in many schools, making it evidence of incompetence to ask for help and an act of intrusion to offer assistance (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1989). Nias (1989) and Pollard (1987) describe the importance of mutual support among staff in schools, even when isolation is the norm. But, when opportunities for interaction with colleagues arise in social settings away from school or in staffrooms, exchanges rarely focus on issues of instructional substance. Instead, teachers talk about innocuous topics such as cooking, television programs, gripes, home life, and the problems, personalities, and family backgrounds of individual students (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Pollard, 1987). Group solidarity is valued because teachers need to present a united front in relation to often threatening outside forces. Discussions of teaching

philosophies and methods are seen as potential sources of disagreement and negative judgments and are, therefore, avoided as threats to solidarity.

Cole (1991) warns that teachers, especially new teachers, need opportunities to form attachments and develop relationships with others they can trust. She sees alienation and withdrawal as repercussions of teacher isolation. Others (e.g. Flinders, 1988; Hargreaves, 1994; Little & McLaughlin, 1993) see teacher isolation not as evidence of implied psychological deficits but as expressions of individualism and rational responses to the constraining environments in which teachers do their work. They see institutional efforts to bring teachers into more collaborative working relationships as "contrived collegiality" (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990, p. 227) that may appear helpful in form but rarely generate genuine interdependence in reality. Whatever the perspective taken, teacher isolation continues to be a fact of school life.

2.3. Teaching is closely associated with "women's work"

Historical analyses of the evolvement of teachers' work confirm what is evident in schools today: Teaching has become a "woman's job" in fact as well as in rhetoric" (Clifford, 1989, p. 300). Most teachers are women, but more importantly than the numerical indicators, teaching has come to be thought of as women's work in Western culture. That stereotyped perception has affected the status of teaching, teachers' images of self, and the ways work is organized and delegated in contemporary schools (Campbell & Neill, 1995; Ceglowski, 1994; Clifford, 1989; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986).

Women's work is associated with mothering and domesticity, and these traits are seen to be the "natural" domain of women and of inherently less value than the acquired skills males are supposed to master in order to be successful workers. Clifford (1989) elaborates:

The theory of sexual division of labor holds that women's laboring will not only be associated with domesticity but that when men and women work in the same occupation they will occupy different spheres, do different sorts

of things, or have their work differentially valued. Thus, in education, men will, on average, teach more older than younger students, teach more boys than girls, and teach the “harder” subjects. (p. 300)

Male teachers are also more likely to move out of the classroom and into administrative positions than their female counterparts (Acker, 1987; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). Male advancement in education is seen by some (e.g. Campbell, et al., 1992) as evidence that a business model is in place that favors male career orientations in which work, not family, has the prime claim on workers’ time. The fact that women have multiple commitments and do not fit the traditional male career track does not necessarily mean that teaching comes second (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). Still, women teachers with families consistently report high levels of stress in trying to balance the responsibilities of home and school (Campbell & Neill, 1995; Campbell et al., 1992; Ceglowski, 1994; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986).

Not all teachers are women, of course, but the feminization of teaching affects men as well as women. Gitlin and Margonis (1995) argue that teachers’ relationship to administrators parallels that of workers to managers. The hierarchical power relations under which all teachers work had their genesis in the early twentieth century based on the belief that women (teachers) were weak and in need of close supervision (by men in positions of authority) (Weiler, 1994). Pay and prestige are low for all teachers. Public perceptions that teaching is a more or less natural activity requiring no special training or expertise and that teaching is still considered temporary work for men and a source of secondary income (to supplement the husband’s pay) for women are based on the pervasive sense that teaching is women’s work. Such perceptions perpetuate teaching’s low status and lack of financial rewards.

Teachers’ work is characterized by uncertainty, isolation, and its historical association with women’s work. These characteristics help explain and, in many ways, are explained by the conditions in which teachers labor. In the next section, working conditions for teachers are explored.

3. Working conditions

What kind of a place is the classroom as a work environment? Teachers who leave the profession often report that their reasons for leaving include dissatisfaction with the working conditions (e.g. Natale, 1993). Many complain that they had no idea how difficult teaching would be when they entered the field. Classrooms are complex, schools are stressful work environments, and teachers are dependent on intrinsic rewards; these three elements of working conditions in schools are addressed below.

3.1. Classrooms are complex environments in which to work

When other professionals do their work, they most often meet their clients individually, address problems one issue at a time, and have time to reflect on problematic situations before acting. Teachers work in a world where they must deal with 25–35 clients simultaneously, where multiple events needing attention are happening at the same time, and where immediate decisions and actions are a necessity (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Huberman, 1993; McLean, 1991).

Teachers have to be in many places at once, attend to a complex array of classroom dimensions, and be ready to make decisions on-the-spot. They do not have the luxury of calling in a specialist for a second opinion, pulling up a state-of-the-art computer model on their professional organization’s home page, or sending a clerk to find precedents on which to base their next move. When confronted with a classroom problem, teachers must act immediately, and their actions, because they are taken in full view of all their students, have consequences beyond their immediate results. Classroom problems do not arise in neat, serial fashion, but are unpredictable, overlapping, and intermittent (McLean, 1991). Just keeping up with all that is happening is a challenge. Dealing effectively with complex problems presented simultaneously and requiring immediate action is a daunting task indeed.

Classrooms are busy places, and just organizing and keeping track of the learning activities of

a large number of children is very difficult. It is made even more problematic because of expectations that teachers should be responsible for much more than academic development. Every action by teachers is filtered through the realization that children's social, psychological, physical, moral, as well as cognitive development are at stake. Teachers must interpret behavior and respond at multiple levels in order to be effective in contemporary classrooms. They have to balance the needs of individual students against the demands of the larger group; they have to make sense of the contradictory roles of encourager and evaluator; they have to find ways to challenge students without defeating them; they have to encourage children's overall development while guaranteeing academic progress. Teachers' day-to-day work is unpredictable, multi-dimensional, and their multiple roles sometimes place them in paradoxical circumstances (Hargreaves & Tucker, 1991; Jordell, 1987; McLean, 1991).

Beyond the immediacy of classrooms, Jordell (1987) argues that both personal and structural influences make teaching complex. Personal influences are those coming from other persons with whom the teacher has contact (i.e. students, colleagues, administrators, parents, and other adults in the community). Each of these "audiences" has expectations of teachers, and addressing these expectations makes teaching even more complex. Structural influences include such features as goals, rules, time, resources, curriculum, number of students, textbooks, testing procedures, and the like. Structural contexts provide frameworks which impinge on all teacher decisions and actions. Huberman (1993) describes other complex structural and personal changes influencing teachers' work:

There are imposed changes in instructional materials. There are yearly cohort changes, each with its own personality and each with a different response to the same instructional treatment. Even within a given cohort, responses can vary from one moment of the day to the next At the elementary school level, teachers are also subject to grade-level shifts from one year to the next, and teachers

introduce instructional changes voluntarily. (p. 26)

Some researchers (e.g. MacLure, 1993; Nias et al., 1989) have pointed out that teachers have a hand in "constructing" the contexts in which they work, that "the impact of context on teacher [is] by no means one-way" (MacLure, 1993, p. 314). Still, understanding that teachers can influence the factors that influence them only increases the complexity of the teaching task.

Casual observers, including many teacher education students, often fail to recognize the difficulties of finding ways to balance the complicated and sometimes competing demands that influence teachers' work. Studies that have looked closely reveal that the classroom is a complex workplace, demanding special abilities, skills, and attitudes of those who work there.

3.2. *Schools are stressful work environments*

Given its complexity, low pay, and undesirable social standing, it is not surprising that teaching is stressful. Teaching is an occupation characterized by a lack of extrinsic rewards. Pay is low, opportunities for advancement are scarce, and long-term benefits are minimal compared to those of others with similar training (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; McLaughlin, 1993). Teachers' work is demanding, and rewards for meeting those demands are basically internal to teachers themselves, placing them in a vulnerable and ultimately stressful situation.

The teachers' work literatures from Europe, Australia, and North America document conditions that make teaching difficult. A partial list includes: the poor physical condition of schools, lack of autonomy, unreasonable workloads, insufficient time to meet expectations, increases in children's needs, additional non-teaching responsibilities, increased difficulties with parents, poor inservice training, inadequate school management, increased accountability, and added responsibilities for children with disabilities (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Campbell et al., 1992; Huberman, 1993; Kelly & Berthelsen, 1995; McLaughlin, 1993; Nias, 1989; Rosenholtz, 1989). The stress-producing effects of

these difficult working conditions are magnified when considered in the light of the meager extrinsic rewards available to teachers. Ashton and Webb (1986) summarize the dynamics of the “white-collar blues” suffered by many teachers:

Teachers come to their work with aspirations for vertical mobility, but find little opportunity for advancement in their chosen profession. They come with the hope that they will earn an adequate income, but they find that their salaries are eroded by inflation and that the pay of many blue-collar workers equals or exceeds their own. They come with the expectation that white-collar work will afford them respectably high status in their community, but find that their prestige is damaged by the media reports of poor schools and unqualified teachers. (pp. 40–41)

Teachers work hard under difficult circumstances for disappointing extrinsic rewards, making teaching a stressful occupation and leaving teachers dependent on intrinsic sources of motivation and satisfaction.

3.3. Teachers depend on intrinsic rewards for job satisfaction

Because extrinsic rewards are few and mostly outside of their control, job satisfaction for teachers rests heavily on the psychic and interpersonal rewards they derive from their work. The research reviewed indicates different sources of rewards, but job satisfaction among teachers is closely tied to intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards.

Nias’ (1989) study of primary teachers in the UK documents the central importance of working with children and helping them learn. Examining the perceptions of early- and mid-career teachers, Nias reports that “the affective rewards of being with children – giving and receiving affection, talking and laughing together, sharing common interests, enjoying shared activities” (p. 99–100) are important to teachers across career stages. North American elementary teachers also find student attachment and learning rewarding (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Hargreaves, 1994); and Australian teachers framed descriptions of their

job’s best aspects in interpersonal terms – for example: “the close personal relationships with students” (Warton et al., 1992, p. 173). While open displays of affection are less acceptable as children age and mature, other sources of intrinsic satisfaction for teachers across age spans include: relationships with colleagues (especially in schools where student achievement is low); the sense of providing an important public service; and enjoyment of teaching activities (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986).

Several analysts have pointed out negative aspects associated with teachers’ dependence on intrinsic rewards, especially those involving close relationships with students (Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves & Tucker, 1991; McLaughlin, 1993; Metz, 1993; Rosenholtz, 1989; Woods, 1987). Woods (1987) sees an inherent conflict in “friendly” (versus “teacherly”) relationships between teacher and child. He argues that the system demands at some level that the teacher be in control of the students’ learning and behavior, and an “overindulgence in friendship can mean that it is difficult to break free when the situation demands one to be teacherly. This in turn can undermine the basis of the friendship” (p. 123). McLaughlin (1993) and Metz (1993) signal the vulnerability of teachers when they depend on relationships with students for their sense of professional fulfillment. Metz (1993) makes her point forcefully:

Students can confirm or destroy such teachers’ pride of craft. As the results of teaching reside in the minds and characters of students, students have ultimate control over the fruit of teachers’ labors. Teachers cannot obtain the satisfaction of a job well done through their own efforts alone; they can obtain them only through the cooperation of their students – the very students they are supposed to discipline, lead, transform, or even reform. To rely on intrinsic rewards in teaching is to build one’s house on shifting sands. (p. 104–105)

Given Metz’ warning, it is troublesome to acknowledge what the research strongly indicates: many teachers are dependent on intrinsic rewards for job satisfaction and professional self-esteem.

The place of self-identity in teaching has been explored in several studies (e.g. Ayers, 1989; Hargreaves & Tucker, 1991; MacLure, 1993; Nias, 1989; Pollard, 1987). Relationships between self and teaching can range from “teaching as identity,” where “there is no clear line delineating the person and the teacher” (Ayers, 1989, p. 130), to “teachers who were no longer able to reconcile their identities with the job in any sense” (MacLure, 1993, p. 317). How a teacher sees himself or herself in relation to teaching can be vitally important in determining job satisfaction. Those who invest the most, who make few distinctions between their roles and themselves, have the greatest likelihood of experiencing fulfillment when the experiences of teaching are positive, but they are also at the greatest risk of disappointment when intrinsic rewards are not forthcoming.

3.4. Teachers are being asked to do more while support and resources are static or deteriorating

Across Western society, workers in occupations from engineers to sales clerks are being asked to do more with less. As businesses and government agencies downsize, their “lean and mean” approach has meant that fewer workers are expected to maintain or increase levels of production with no increase in support or reward. Recent research on schools in North America, Australia, and the UK indicates that teachers are also caught in the trap of being asked to do more with less (Campbell & Neill, 1994; Hargreaves, 1992, 1994; Kelly & Berthelsen, 1995; Smyth, 1995). Smyth (1995) includes the following as descriptors of the context of the devolution of teachers’ work: “global restructuring, international competitiveness, leaner forms of production, flexible workforce and multi-skilling, international best practice, post-Fordist forms of work organization, free-market thinking, and severe fiscal austerity” (p. 169). Hargreaves (1994) argues that in response to economic globalization and multicultural migration, teachers are being charged with the task of economic regeneration and with rebuilding national cultures and identities. Unfortunately, demands on teachers have been heightened at the same time that schools across the globe

are suffering within a fiscal context of extreme austerity.

I have documented the complexity and difficulty of teaching above. What I am arguing here is that expectations for teachers have escalated over the past few years and that working conditions and institutional supports are staying the same *at best*. School reform and accountability movements across Western schooling are changing what it is like to work as a teacher. Some recent trends impacting teachers’ worklives include: expectations for improved student achievement have escalated and teacher accountability increased; paper work, meetings, and administrative responsibilities for teachers have increased; teachers have been asked to take more responsibility for managing the work of others; bureaucratic control and standardization have increased in schools; teachers have less control over how they organize time and present curricula; teachers are expected to implement multiple school improvement innovations; teachers have less “non-contact” or “planning” time at school; the tasks of teaching that go beyond actual teaching have increased; and teachers have been required to do more work on their own time, away from school (Campbell & Neill, 1994; Hargreaves, 1992, 1994; Hatch & Freeman, 1988; Kelly & Berthelsen, 1995; Little & McLaughlin, 1993; Osborn & Broadfoot, 1992; Popkewitz & Lind, 1989; Ross, 1992; Whitford, et al., 1993).

Intensification is a term that aptly describes the prevailing direction of teachers’ work. In Hargreaves’ (1992) words, “Teachers’ work has become increasingly *intensified*, with teachers expected to respond to greater pressures and comply with multiplying innovations under conditions that are at best unstable and at worst deteriorating” (p. 88). The results of the intensification of teaching are difficult to gauge, but Hargreaves’ (1992) study of elementary teachers offers the following claims regarding what intensification leads to:

- reduced time for relaxation during the school day,
- lack of time to retool and keep up with one’s field,
- chronic and persistent work overload,
- reductions in the quality of programs and services,

- excessive dependency on outside expertise,
- scarcities of preparation time. (abstracted from pp. 88–90)

Evidence for the intensification hypothesis rings true with my experiences and the testimonies of school people I have worked with in North America, Australia, and the UK. It seems safe to assert that teachers' work is becoming more demanding while support is being reduced or held constant.

Nias (1989) has pointed out that teaching "has a bottomless appetite for the investment of scarce personal resources, such as time, interest, and energy" (p. 208). The intensification of teachers' work and the open-ended manner in which teachers' responsibilities are defined make dedicated and highly motivated teachers especially vulnerable. Since there are unclear criteria for success and always more to do, conscientious teachers usually feel they have not done enough (Hargreaves, 1994). Studying teachers' responses to massive changes in British schools, Campbell and colleagues (Campbell & Neill, 1994; Campbell et al., 1992) conclude that teachers can be divided into two broad categories: "the over-conscientious and the sane" (Campbell et al., 1992, p. 154). Conscientiousness is causing so much stress on teachers trying to meet impossible objectives that it becomes counter-productive.

The research paints a bleak picture of teachers' work. Classrooms are complex, teaching is difficult and stressful, and teaching provides few rewards. There is evidence that teachers' work is undergoing a period of intensification and that conscientious teachers may be suffering the most from increased, yet diffuse, expectations. How do teachers react to these constraints? How do they cope with the demands of teaching and balance these with their needs for personal and professional fulfillment? These questions are addressed in the following section.

4. Teachers' work as coping and adapting

How do teachers manage to be effective in the school workplace? The literature reviewed revealed

part of the picture of how teachers make accommodations and adjustments to the demands of teaching. Again, it is important to remember that each community, school, and classroom is different. Each teacher brings his or her own experience, disposition, and expertise to the teaching setting. That means that each new teacher will face a set of unique work supports and constraints and make adjustments in his or her own way. The generalizations reported here (and above) cannot characterize every case, but knowing how others cope and adapt can give prospective teachers a framework for understanding ways to make accommodations to the complex expectations of teaching.

4.1. Teachers use a variety of mechanisms for coping with the demands of their work

Teacher educators often complain about how difficult it is to find suitable field sites for the placement of their interns or student teachers. The disjunction between what they are teaching at the university and what their students experience in the schools is a source of perpetual frustration (Hatch, 1993). Understood within the complexity and difficulty of working as a teacher, the conservatism, reliance on traditional methods, and practical approach taken by school-based practitioners may become more understandable to teacher education specialists.

In spite of its central importance to most teacher preparation programs, many teachers do not find the theoretical knowledge of the university relevant to their work in the school (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Halliwell, 1995; Hatton, 1988; Huberman, 1993). Rather than applying grand theories drawn from education and associated disciplines, teachers "develop types of *practice-generated theories* in daily interaction in the classroom. These theories are relatively specific, concerning categories like students and teaching, and remain tentative and developmental" (Jordell, 1987, p. 168). Some analysts see teachers' emphasis of personal practical knowledge as evidence of strength (e.g. Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Halliwell, 1995; Ross, 1992), while others accuse teachers of being *bricoleurs*, professional do-it-yourselfers, who focus on solving immediate, practical problems and ignore the long-term consequences of their tinkering (e.g. Hatton,

1988; Huberman, 1993). Whatever the perspective, many teachers react to the demands of teaching by emphasizing the practical in their day-to-day problem solving.

Other reactions identified in the literature demonstrate the wide variety of possible responses by teachers to the stresses of their work. Woods (1987) describes ways teachers relieve stress resulting from unresolved role strain, including: (a) cultivating split personalities, (b) compromising beliefs about appropriate classroom organization, (c) modifying attitudes, and (d) altering commitments. Pollard (1987) details ways teachers deal with biased institutional expectations: (a) acceptance – living with things the way they are because of agreement or because taking the line of least resistance is the most attractive alternative; (b) by-passing – just not doing what the institution expects and defending actions on the basis of autonomy, special expertise, or both; (c) subversion – working behind the scenes to gradually change the values of the institution; and (d) challenge – standing and fighting for values and practices that run counter to institutional norms. Yonemura (1986) lists reactions to the constraints of teaching as follows: (a) distancing – disengaging from self and from students; (b) staying on the surface – focusing on the immediately observable, technical issues of teaching; (c) role absorption – becoming preoccupied with the rules, regulations, and role expectations of teaching; and (d) acting as expert – relying on power and authority to solve problems. Any of these reactions could be critiqued as anything from understandable to unprofessional (for contrasting views, see Gitlin & Margonis, 1995; Hatton, 1988). One goal here is to encourage more careful thought concerning the evaluation of teachers and teaching by teacher educators. Thinking of teacher behaviors as adaptations to complex and difficult circumstances is a healthy perspective from which to begin.

4.2. Teachers adapt in response to the dilemmas inherent in their work

Researchers from all of the international regions sampled in this review have identified the ability to adapt to the dilemmas and paradoxes of teaching as central to teaching success (Feiman-Nemser

& Floden, 1986; Halliwell, 1994, 1995; Jordell, 1987; Kelly & Berthelsen, 1995; McLean, 1991; Nias, 1989). Working as a teacher can never be reduced to following a prescribed set of pre-established criteria. Teacher decisions rarely involve simple choices between clearly opposing options. As Nias (1989) explains,

The teacher's role is ambiguous and ill-defined, hedged about with uncertainty, inconsistency, and tension. To 'be' a teacher is to be relaxed and in control yet tired and under stress, to feel whole while being pulled apart, to be in love with one's work but daily talk of leaving it. (p. 191)

Teachers' worklives are mainly experienced in the "gray" areas between "black and white" alternatives. Paradox and contradiction are inherent components of the teaching workplace. Examples of teaching dilemmas, contradictions, or conflicts identified in the research literature reviewed include:

- (a) *ambiguous objectives* – goals are so diffuse that there is little agreement about what constitutes effective teaching (Jordell, 1987; Nias, 1989);
- (b) *contradictory functions* – official purposes of schools (e.g., emancipation and optimal individual development) often run counter to other functions such as to prepare workers for a constricted labor market (Jordell, 1987);
- (c) *dilemmas of power* – teachers are expected to behave as autonomous team members and classroom leaders but are treated as subordinates by administrators (Halliwell, 1995);
- (d) *philosophy-reality conflicts* – mandatory innovations or community and system expectations sometimes conflict with teachers' philosophical ideals and commitments (Halliwell, 1995; Hatch & Freeman, 1988; Kelly & Berthelsen; Nias, 1989);
- (e) *classroom control issues* – teachers sometimes operate in systems that expect them to "control" their classrooms using domination and subordination of students while teachers believe that students should be learning to share control and internalize responsibility for their own actions (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Halliwell, 1995; Nias, 1989);

- (f) *individual versus group orientations* – teachers are required to meet the needs of the whole class while attending to the diverse needs of individual students (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Nias, 1989);
- (g) *role conflicts* – teachers are supposed to nurture and encourage children's development while being responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and grading them (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Nias, 1989); they are supposed to be "objective" and detached when they know that close interpersonal relationships benefit both teachers and students (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; McLean, 1991);
- (h) *future versus present orientations* – teachers sometimes feel forced to sacrifice the here and now of living in the classroom to the future-orientation inherent in education (McLean, 1991).

Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) summarize the conflicts of teaching by drawing distinctions between personal and organizational aspects:

The work of teaching includes all those aspects directly related to the realization of educational goals: motivating students, getting to know them as individuals, assessing their understanding. The job of teaching is concerned with the realization of organizational or bureaucratic goals: maintaining order in classrooms and corridors, keeping students busy, categorizing students so that they can be processed by the administrative machinery. (p. 517)

It would be great if a finite set of clearly expressed propositions about teaching could be extrapolated and handed to new teachers. But teaching is far too dynamic, complex, contradictory, and human to be reduced to a few guiding principles. Halliwell (1994) characterizes teachers' work as "matter of managing unresolvable dilemmas" (p. 9). Teachers who have found ways to accept that teaching is full of contradictions and tensions, then to adapt in healthy ways are models of the kind of individuals who operate successfully in the complex world of classroom teaching. In the final section of this paper, I will argue that helping

prospective teachers see the complexity of teaching, accept the inherent dilemmas to teachers' work, and approach teaching as dilemma management ought to be an important objective of teacher education programs.

5. Implications for teacher educators

I shared a draft of the body of this paper with several inservice and preservice teachers and asked them to tell me what they learned from the reading, if the information was useful to them, if they thought such information should be taught in preservice teacher preparation programs, and, if so, how. The group was small (27 teachers and upper-level education students), and they knew that I (their instructor and/or friend) wrote the draft, so there is no pretense about the limitations of the information. Still, some of their comments may be helpful in understanding the place of research about teachers' work in teacher education curriculum.

Only one individual thought that such information should not be included in a preservice teacher education program. Her reasoning was that while it would be good for non-educators to have access to such information (so "they could understand the stresses of teaching and help educators make provisions that could change some of the problems"), to teach it, "may give the impression that universities are putting down current practices in the schools and are trying to scare off recruits." A few others mentioned the value of sharing the information with a wider audience as a way of attracting support for teachers, but all took the position that the information was important for teachers-to-be. A few of their written comments demonstrate the dimensions of their arguments:

- "I think it should be taught so students will not go into the profession blindly. Today's teachers need more than a love of children and the desire to teach to be successful."
- "It helped make real the internal conflicts that many teachers experience, but students have little understanding of. By being aware of these issues, future teachers will be better prepared to handle their feelings and worries."

- “It made me realize that my fears as a teacher are shared by others, that everyone faces the uncertainty of no definite answers, and that everyone has difficulty balancing all the roles of a teacher. This will help teachers be prepared for all aspects of the job.”
- “This content is absolutely essential! I had no idea what type of mental and physical stress I was walking into when I began teaching.”

As I talk with teacher educators in the US and abroad about why their students choose teaching, everyone nods and smiles when someone mentions student answers like, “I just love children,” “I feel *called* to teach,” or “I want to make a difference.” These are not the wrong answers to the why teach question. But, teacher educators may be setting them up for a fall if they fail to explore with their students the day-to-day realities of working in schools. New teachers with the highest commitment to the intrinsic rewards of being with children may be at the most risk given the increasing complexity and intensification of teaching. I agree with my own students and colleagues that it should be part of the work of teacher educators to introduce students to what one called “the real world of teachers’ work.”

An important caveat should frame all discussions of the teachers’ work literature (or generalizations from any research base): research findings highlight commonalties and often obscure particularities, differences, and special circumstances. Teaching is different across national boundaries, local education authorities, schools, and even classrooms. Teachers come to their work with different backgrounds, preparation, experiences, and ideologies. While knowing the general trends that strongly influence teachers’ work is important, it would be a mistake to portray teaching or teachers in ways that leave out context and individual differences. Indeed, if teachers-to-be are to be effective in adjusting to and making positive changes in the experience of working as a teacher, they need to understand that teachers are not passive “victims” of their working conditions, but participate actively in the reconstitution of their workplace every day.

A simple model for organizing experiences for preservice and beginning teachers could be built

around three broad aims: (a) introduce the characteristics and working conditions of contemporary teaching; (b) help students understand the complexities of teaching and accept the dilemmas inherent in teachers’ work; and (c) assist them in developing personalized approaches to dilemma management (Halliwell, 1994). Integrating suggestions from my informants, I will next identify possible strategies for accomplishing these aims.

Traditional approaches to teaching content can, of course, be used to introduce students to the teachers’ work literature. Lecturing, assigning articles as readings, having group discussions based on common readings, completing individual library research projects, giving reports, or doing abstracts of important books are all useful ways of introducing this important content. Additional strategies include designing cooperative learning activities, inviting guest speakers, setting up panel discussions, and organizing seminars or mini-conferences on particular dimensions of teachers’ work.

Helping students understand complexity and accept the often paradoxical nature of teaching requires strategies that go beyond didactic instruction. One approach would be to enrich the field experiences that are part of most programs to include a concentration on the complex roles of the teacher. Cooperating teachers can share in the planning of such experiences that might include: shadowing an experienced teacher, interviewing teachers, listening to teacher presentations on what it is like to be a teacher, participating in informal sessions during which students and teachers exchange perspectives on teachers’ work, and working through case studies in which teaching dilemmas are identified and discussed (for sample cases and ways to teach them, see e.g. Kowalski et al. (1990) and Silverman et al. (1992)).

Case studies are also valuable for helping students develop “interiorized” dilemma management strategies. Within case studies or in response to dilemmas identified by students, role playing real teaching situations can be effective in encouraging students to generate responses that allow them to manage the paradoxes of teaching. In addition, self-documentation during initial experiences in schools can be an effective tool for helping students monitor their own socialization into the world of

work. Shared-journaling techniques and feedback sessions with peers and/or more experienced teachers are ways to connect self-monitoring to the wisdom and support of others. Finally, the move to extended periods of practice teaching in internship-type arrangements seems much preferred to short-term student teaching experiences when it comes to working through teaching dilemmas with the support of a competent, successful, mentoring teacher.

A thoughtful reviewer of an early draft of this manuscript noted that the constraints of *teacher educators' work* make adding a teachers' work dimension to the curriculum problematic. One strategy for including some of the new content and experiences just described within an already packed curriculum is to integrate them with activities that are already in place. Some examples of specific activity "extensions" that I have tried in my own teaching include the following:

- (a) Along with instruction on state-of-the-art teaching methods, I include case studies that bring home to students the dilemmas faced in the workplace when parents, fellow teachers, or administrators disagree with the implementation of innovative instructional techniques (e.g. see "Melinda Grant Case" in Silverman et al. (1992) or "Kathy Case" by Kleinfeld (1992). After introducing the cases in class, students are sent to the library, internet, or any resources they can bring to the task to find information that will help them deal with the dilemmas in the cases. To wrap up, students write letters to parents explaining the methods they will be implementing, then they role play a conference with a skeptical co-worker or administrator.
- (b) As part of pre-internship field experience requirements, students are assigned to complete a photo essay entitled "Teachers' Work" or "Roles of the Teacher." I have used this assignment successfully to get students to look more closely at the complexity of teachers' worklives. In preparation for the assignment, I lecture from the literature reviewed above and assign readings to get students thinking more deeply about teachers' work (e.g. Rowan, 1994; selections from Hargreaves, 1994). Students take pictures of teachers at work, interview them,

and construct an "essay" in which they use photos and text, in a format they create, to represent what they have learned about the reality of teachers' work. Although they are uncomfortable being photographed at first, cooperating teachers enjoy helping the students with this assignment and see it as a way to take prospective teachers behind the scenes and introduce them to the unseen rigors of teaching.

- (c) Seminars built into our internship model are modified to include specific attention to the socialization processes at work as individuals negotiate the transition from student to teacher. Students are assigned readings on specific issues related to teachers' work (e.g. Cole's (1991) article on relationships and individualism). They connect the readings to their classroom experiences during discussions in the seminar. Experienced teachers are also invited to participate, commenting on the readings and their particular experiences with the issues at hand.

To conclude, every new teacher's repertoire of socialization management strategies will be unique to him or her, but teacher educators can set the tone and provide experiences that facilitate the development of the knowledge, understanding, and skill students need in order to operate successfully in the world of teachers' work. At least part of what we do in our preservice programs ought to address more systematically the issues raised in this article. To ignore what we know about teachers' work or to assume that students will learn what they need when they begin teaching, perpetuates the perceived separation of teacher education from the real world of teaching. By including a "teaching as work" scaffold, we provide a useful structure on which to build stronger curricula and richer experiences for the workers we are preparing.

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